

South Bascom (North) Urban Village: Opportunities and Constraints

Background

Existing Land Use and Built Form: South Bascom Avenue is predominantly a commercial corridor but also contains some regionally significant institutional uses such as the Valley Medical Center and San Jose City College. There are no residential uses located on South Bascom itself, but the corridor is virtually surrounded by single-family detached residences and some small multi-family residential buildings.

The built form of the street consists of low-rise office buildings intermixed with aging strip-mall retail buildings. Much of the development on the street is auto-oriented with large setbacks and parking located in front of the building between the building and the street.

One of the most noticeable features of the corridor is the width of the street. At some points the street is as wide as eight lanes. The width of the street coupled with the auto-centric development and existing urban design makes for an uninteresting streetscape and inhospitable pedestrian environment.

Traffic and Transit Ridership: As mentioned previously, South Bascom Avenue is a very wide street, stretching as wide as eight lanes at points. This width is unnecessary because the street has far more capacity than is needed now and projected to need in the future. This is evident in the level of service recorded at the intersections along South Bascom Avenue. With the exception of two intersections, all of the other intersections on the corridor have levels of service that are significantly above the City's designated acceptable level of service of D. The two exceptions are South Bascom and Moorpark Avenues, and South Bascom and Fruitdale Avenues, which are both located adjacent to the Santa Clara County Valley Medical Center and have levels of service slightly above the City's level of acceptable service.

The corridor is well serviced by public transit having two bus routes along South Bascom Avenue. Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) bus Routes 61 and 62 both run from Good Samaritan Hospital in southwest San Jose to northeast San Jose via Bascom Avenue. The average weekday daily ridership for each of the lines is just over 1,700 riders. In addition, there is a light rail station at the southern end of the Urban Village, adjacent to the intersection of Southwest Expressway and South Bascom Avenue. This light rail line runs from Campbell to Mountain View, via Downtown San Jose and the North San Jose employment center where there are a concentration of technology companies.

Historic and Cultural Resources: Since most of the existing development along South Bascom was built less than 50 years ago, with most development built in the 1960's and 70's, there are no identified historic structures. While a historic survey of South Bascom Avenue has not been conducted, it is not anticipated that any historic resources would be identified as part of such a survey. Although some of the development may be approaching the pinnacle 50 year milestone, there are few, if any, buildings along the corridor that are exemplars of a particular era or architectural style. By not having historically significant buildings located on the corridor, this provides ample flexibility to redevelop existing buildings and properties.

Parks, Community Centers and Libraries: The neighborhood surrounding the South Bascom Urban Village does not have a lot of community resources for residents to enjoy. With that being said, one of the greatest recent community triumphs in the neighborhood is the Bascom Community Center located north of Stokes Street on the east side of South Bascom Avenue. The Bascom Community Center, which provides the neighborhood with gymnasium space, a fitness gym and studios, public gathering space, and space for a library, was complete and ready for use as of December 2010. Unfortunately, due to budget constraints, the community center was not able to open until 2012. The Library, which is still not open, is scheduled to open in 2013.

In terms of parks and open space. Although there are no City parks near the Urban Village, there are some areas of open space within the vicinity of the Urban Village. The Los Gatos Creek Trail, a 9.7 mile long pedestrian and bicycle trail that runs from the Town of Los Gatos to the City of San Jose along the Los Gatos Creek, is located just outside the southern Urban Village boundary. Del Mar High School, which is located north of Stokes Street and west of Southwest Expressway, has outdoor spaces and playing fields.

Opportunities

Location: One of the main benefits of this Urban Village is its location. The South Bascom Urban Village has exceptional freeway access, being conveniently located near both Interstate 280 and Highway 17. Furthermore, there are a number of regional attractions both within and just outside of this Urban Village. Located directly on South Bascom are the Valley Medical Center and the San Jose City College. Both of these institutions draw a significant number of people to the area. Santana Row, a regional mixed-use commercial center, and Westfield Valley Fair Mall are located in close proximity to the Urban Village. These key regional destinations can be utilized as a catalyst for future growth in the area, especially for businesses and individuals who want to be close to these existing hubs of activity.

Recent Development Activity: Although there is not significant new development within the South Bascom Urban Village, the recent development that has occurred has been focused on community serving uses and institutions. For instance, the major recent development activity occurring within this Urban Village is the renovation of the Valley Medical Center. The upgraded facility will not only benefit the community because of the medical services it provides to the surrounding community, but could also spur other associated development such as medical offices, assisted living facilities and new residences for medical facility employees who may want to live close to work.

The other recent development in the neighborhood is the construction of a new City operated community center and library. With a contemporary design and the inclusion of public art, this building sets the tone for future developments along the corridor that add to the streetscape of South Bascom.

Lot Size: On the east side of South Bascom, as well as, along many portions of the west side, the lots are deep and large which makes them very conducive to redevelopment; most of the lots on the street are all over 200 feet deep, if not deeper. Lot consolidation is not needed in order to

create large enough parcels to attract developers. This poses a great opportunity for development on this corridor because there will be less constraints on the size and type of development.

On the west side of the street there are some parcels that are relatively shallow. For instance, there are some lots that are only 60 feet deep and abut single-family residences. Development on these shallow lots will require that more attention be paid to the site and building design in order to ensure that the interface between the two uses is compatible. With careful consideration of building placement, as well as, a stepping down of building heights, these shallow lots could be conducive to new development and provide a different development option than the large lots elsewhere on the corridor.

Property Ownership: In addition to the generally large size of parcels along this corridor, the current property ownership along South Bascom also contributes to the ability to redevelop because consolidation of properties owned by multiple owners will not be necessary. In fact, there are multiple cases where a number of separate properties are under the same ownership. This adds flexibility to the type and form of development that can occur in the Urban Village, which can prove to be more attractive to developers.

The largest property owners along South Bascom are the County of Santa Clara and San Jose City College. While it is unlikely that these properties will be sold and redeveloped in the future, the presence of the hospital and the college could, as discussed above, act as a catalyst for new development along the corridor.

Light Rail: Located at the southern edge of the Urban Village boundary there is a VTA light rail station that serves the area and presents a significant opportunity. This light rail line stretches from the City of Campbell to Downtown Mountain View and runs through both Downtown Campbell and Downtown San Jose. Currently, the light rail stop, and the property adjacent to it are underutilized. This location provides a great opportunity for the redevelopment of the site in a way that highlights the VTA stop, intensifies uses that would benefit from the transit connectivity, and revitalizes the physical form of the light rail stop itself.

South Bascom Avenue: South Bascom, which is eight lanes at its widest point, has more motor vehicle capacity than is needed now and projected to need in the future. This presents an excellent opportunity to put the street on a “road diet,” potentially reducing the number of vehicle lanes and redesigning the right of way to be more pedestrian and bicycle friendly.

Constraints

Corridor Length: The South Bascom Urban Village area is approximately one and a quarter miles long. Nodes of development would better suit this corridor as opposed to linear development. There are also specific existing areas that lend themselves to more density. Two areas in particular stand out as great opportunities for nodal development. The former Dick’s Center site at the southern part of the Village, and the Valley Medical Center and San Jose City College area at the northern end. The Dick’s Center lot is an ideal node in the Urban Village because it is located beside the VTA light rail, is very large, and is currently underutilized. The

area around the Valley Medical Center and San Jose State College is also an ideal location for a node, because the existing uses act as a draw to businesses and individuals. The high level of development in this area may already classify it as a node, but through the Urban Village planning process this area can act as a catalyst for other development.

Surrounding Single-Family Neighborhood: The predominant use in the areas neighboring the corridor is single-family detached residential, with some multi-family residential buildings. The integration of new development will require that special attention be paid to design guidelines that stipulate height limits and terraced architecture that steps back from single-family residences in order to ensure that there is a complimentary interface between the different building typologies. Fortunately, most of the lots abutting the single-family residences are deep, which will allow for some site design and architectural flexibility without compromising the interface between differing uses and building typology.

Parks: One of the major constraints with respect to parks in the area is that although the City has a mechanism in which to elicit parkland or funds in lieu of parkland from developers, the City does not presently have the funds to construct, operate or service new park land facilities. Currently, the City requires that residential developers provide 3.5 acres/1,000 residents of neighborhood/community serving parkland. This is accomplished in one or more of the following ways: dedicate land, construct a “turnkey” park, construct qualifying private recreation facilities, or pay an in-lieu fee. Despite requiring developers to dedicate parklands, the City’s current fiscal state does not provide funds to build or service such parks.